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Public speaking remains one of the most desirable and necessary skills for college graduates to possess (Morreale & Pearson, 2008; Stevens, 2005). However, executives and Human Resource Directors report that college graduates continue to join organizations with underdeveloped communication skills including the inability to effectively give a public presentation (Crosling & Ward, 2002; Marchant, 1999). Research also suggests that the majority of the adult population experience significant levels of anxiety while speaking in the public arena (Ayres & Hopf, 1990). In order to effectively address the value of public speaking for student employability, one of the primary goals of many communication departments is to provide students with the necessary skills and strategies to effectively organize and deliver a public presentation (Morreale, Worley, & Hugenberg, 2010). Unfortunately, a method to accurately assess public speaking skills has long been debated by both educators and scholars (Morreale, et al., 2010; Schreiber, Paul, & Shibley, 2012; Morreale, Hugenberg, & Worley, 2006; Morreale, Brooks, Berko, & Cooke, 1994), especially when courses differ in the amount of public speaking opportunities offered. For example, many uni-

versities and colleges require students to enroll in a basic communication course as part of their general education, but the substance of these courses greatly varies. According to research by Morreale et al. (2010), for some programs the basic course in communication is a class in public speaking (50.4%); for other programs, the required class is a hybrid (36.3%) one that covers the foundations of communication (e.g., interpersonal, small group, and organizational) and includes a section on public speaking.

With differential training and speaking opportunities, the primary concern is the ability to identify reliable, valid, and standardized instruments that assess the critical competencies of public speaking in any basic course format (Morreale et al., 2010; Morreale et al., 2006; Schreiber et al., 2012; Morreale et al., 1994; Quianthy, 1990; Rubin, 1982). The goal of the current study, therefore, is to examine assessment tools that have been created to examine student learning and application of public speaking skills in a hybrid version of the basic communication course. This is especially important as public speaking courses are becoming less popular (Morreale et al., 2010). Thus, creating a public speaking assessment instrument that analyzes whether college graduates have the necessary presentational skills for life in the "real world" is vital for informing communication departments and institutions of higher education.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Assessment of student learning outcomes remains an integral process in higher education and helps to en-

sure that students successfully achieve course competencies such as public speaking skills (Morreale & Backlund, 2007). More importantly, educators and researchers argue that assessment guarantees the survival of the basic communication course (Beebe, Mottet, & Roach, 2004) and highlights the communication discipline's distinct role within academia (Backlund & Arneson, 2000). The primary goal of assessment within the basic communication course "is to provide evidence that the instruction received will increase students' knowledge, improve students' behaviors, and change students' attitudes toward course content" (LeBlanc, Vela, & Houser, 2011, p. 66). Thus, assessment enables educators to witness the transition students make in terms of achieving learning outcomes (such as presentational competency) during a semester and to "know if we are actually doing what we intend to do in the classroom and in our educational programs" (Backlund & Arneson, 2000, p. 88). With this in mind, the primary goal of the current study is to assess the change in student public speaking behaviors after receiving public speaking training as a component of the hybrid format of the basic communication course. In addition, it is important to examine the validity and reliability of assessment instruments developed to determine students' public speaking competence.

Public Speaking Assessment

Assessment in the public speaking arena has long been debated among communication researchers. In fact, some scholars suggest this process began with Aristotelian models of public speaking around 300 B.C. (Cooper, 1932). More recently, this debate has centered

around the discussion of communication competence, including how to operationalize the construct, whether competence is trait or state-like, and whether the focus should be on appropriateness or effectiveness (Morreale, Moore, Taylor, Surges-Tatum, & Hulbert-Johnson, 1993). For these reasons, many argue that identifying a valid standardized instrument that can reliably assess communication competence is impractical (Backlund & Morreale, 1994). Thus, at the 1990 Speech Communication Association conference on Assessment of Oral Communication skills, participants argued communication competence should be assessed within specific contexts (e. g., public speaking; National Communication Association, n.d.). This discussion spurred the identification of specific criteria by which speaking competency can be judged. The *Competent Speaker* instrument, which is widely used in communication classes across the United States, was derived from these criteria (Morreale, 1990; Morreale, 1994; National Communication Association, n.d.).

The Competent Speaker instrument, endorsed by the National Communication Association (NCA), is widely considered useful for assessing public speaking in the classroom (National Communication Association, 1998). Despite support of this instrument from NCA-sanctioned guidelines regarding competent speaking, relatively few studies have examined or assessed the benefits and usefulness of this form. Additionally, instructors from many institutions continue to develop their own instruments to assess public speaking competence in the classroom (Talkington & Boileau, 2007). In Morreale and colleagues' (2006) study on the state of the basic communication course across the nation, 69% of

instructors indicated that they develop their own assessment instruments for measuring students' communication competence. This is problematic in that many of these instruments are not examined for reliability and validity, and may be indicative of why most basic course administrators continue to identify course consistency/standardization and assessment as the two highest ranking problems facing the basic communication course (Morreale et al., 2010). Thus, the current study aims to fill this void in determining the reliability and validity of public speaking grading rubrics (for informative and persuasive speaking assignments) that are intended to accommodate the hybrid format of the basic course.

As previously mentioned, approximately 36% of two-year colleges and four-year universities currently offer a hybrid version of their primary basic communication course (Morreale et al., 2010). As public speaking is only taught in one of the three units offered in this orientation of the basic course, the Competent Speaker instrument may be too advanced and detailed. For example, the Competent Speaker form scores a student's ability to both organize (50% of the score) and deliver (50% of the score) a presentation (Morreale, 1990). Students taking a public speaking-focused basic course would certainly benefit from being assessed with this instrument. However, students enrolled in hybrid orientations of the basic communication course generally only present one or two speeches (Morreale et al., 2010) and typically receive basic classroom instruction on public speaking elements. Furthermore, only one-third of the course focuses on acquiring high levels of public speaking competency, thus students are unlikely to develop the same

delivery skills as those in a public-speaking intensive course.

With this in mind, a primary purpose of the current study is to compare the course grading rubrics at a major Southwestern university with the Competent Speaker form to determine concurrent validity. Although two different grading rubrics were utilized (Informative and Persuasive), the framework for assessing competent speaking skills is the same for both instruments. Comparing the valid and reliable Competent Speaker instrument to the public speaking assessment forms would enhance the usefulness of the assessment forms (being tested in the current study) in the context of introductory hybrid communication courses (Babbie, 2011). In addition, the instrument may serve as a guide for other hybrid basic communication courses. Thus, the following research question is posited:

RQ 1: Are student grades on informative and persuasive grading rubrics related to scores on the Competent Speaker instrument?

Predictors of Public Speaking Competence

In addition to the focus on public speaking assessment, researchers and educators alike have focused on identifying predictors of college students' competence of public speaking skills (Hansen & Hansen, n.d.; Marchant, 1999; Morreale et al., 2010). Previous research suggests positive predictors such as practicing in front of an audience (Smith & Frymier, 2006), grade point average, number of rehearsals (Menzel & Carrell, 1994), previous public speaking experience (Pearson & Child, 2008; Rubin, Graham, & Mignerey, 1990), state com-

munication apprehension (Menzel & Carrell, 1994), and biological sex (Pearson, Carmon, Child, & Semlak, 2008) all influence student grades on public speaking assignments. Other literature in oral competency highlights the role of communication apprehension in the public speaking process and suggests high levels of communication apprehension negatively impact student public speaking scores (Ayres, 1988, 1992; Booth-Butterfield & Booth-Butterfield, 1990; Beatty, Balfantz, & Kuwabara, 1989; McCroskey, 1977, 1982). Basic communication courses, especially those with a greater emphasis on public speaking, rely on behavioral training, public speaking demonstrations, and performance feedback to decrease student communication apprehension and improve confidence and competence (Robinson, 1997). The hybrid format, on the other hand, offers basic instruction in the elements of effective public speaking and little, if any, skills training of public speaking competencies.

In addition to instruction in public speaking, the amount and type of student practice prior to the presentation have been identified as an important influence on public speaking competence (Pearson, Child, Herakova, Semlak, & Angelos, 2008). Along with this, course engagement, or amount of time spent working on course-related tasks, and writing competency are significantly related to student speech grades (Pearson et al., 2008). Thus, higher scores on student speeches stem from preparation prior to the actual delivery of the speech in the classroom. More specifically, students who practice in front of an audience are more likely to receive higher evaluations than those who practice without an audience present (Smith & Frymier, 2006). This highlights

the corrective feedback function an audience provides during a practice session. Book (1985) argues feedback serves three functions: to provide audience reaction, to inform the speaker of areas for public speaking improvement, and to encourage the speaker in areas of strength. This provides further evidence that practicing—especially in front of an audience—can be a positive influence on students' public speaking skills.

An emergent theme from the research to date, suggests that practicing speeches and being prepared influence student speech scores. Thus, if instructors hope to enhance students' learning and promote real-life application, this is an area to stress. Students who are provided with actual public speaking skills training and provided corrective feedback from professional trainers would likely achieve higher scores than those who do not receive training. Although educators and researchers have argued the importance of using corporate skills training in the higher education classroom (Kolb, 1994), a gap in the basic communication course regarding the training that occurs prior to assessment of student speaking skills seems evident. It also stands to reason that this skills training in a hybrid course that focuses on communication skills in a variety of contexts, would be much lower.

The literature in training and development supports the assumption that training positively influences the acquisition of presentational skills (Heyes & Stuart, 1996; Seibold, Kudsi, & Rude, 1993). In fact, individuals attending corporate public speaking training sessions rated themselves more effectively after receiving training. Not only did self-assessments improve as a result of skills training, but colleagues' assessments of others'

public speaking skills significantly improved as well (Seibold et al., 1993). Though a very different context, the benefits of supplemental skills training is evident. Furthermore, in a pre-post test study design, communication experts rated individuals higher in public speaking competency after attending skills training (Carell, 2009). In addition to psychomotor or behavioral changes, studies have also identified positive affective changes following skills training. Specifically, employee motivation, job satisfaction, and confidence in ability to complete the job description all significantly improved after receiving communication skills training (Heyes & Stuart, 1996).

The previously mentioned studies primarily focused on training within courses with the sole focus of enhancing public speaking skills. What is unknown, however, is whether these same results may be attained within a hybrid course where the focus on public speaking and training is less predominant. With this in mind, a second purpose of the current study is to extend the research in communication assessment to include an examination of student public speaking skills before and after skills training in a hybrid format of the basic communication course. As these courses generally have decreased opportunities for student practice-time, comparing student results when supplemental training is and is not offered would be particularly informative for programs offering this format. Thus, a second research question was identified:

RQ2: Do public speaking scores for students who receive supplemental public speaking skills training, differ significantly from students who only receive classroom instruction?

METHOD

Participants

Two speeches in a basic communication course at a large, Southwestern university were delivered by 128 students during an six-week summer session. From this group, 28 students self-selected to attend a supplemental training workshop following their first speech (informative) and, therefore, were designated as the *experimental group*. From the remaining 100 students, 35 were randomly selected (every 2nd speaker selected from the alphabetized list) to have their speeches assessed as the *control group*.

Procedures

In order to test the research questions a quasi-experimental pretest-posttest research design was utilized. An experimental group and control group were created to determine whether students who received supplemental training in the eight competencies of *The Competent Speaker* (Morreale, 1994) assessment instrument would improve and earn significantly higher competency scores and class speech scores than students only receiving classroom instruction. Students in the hybrid basic communication course delivered two speeches during the last two weeks of the six-week summer term: Informative and Problem-Solution (persuasive). In order to determine the training effects on competent speaking scores, all student speeches were recorded by their instructors and videos transferred to the researchers conducting the study. As this study also sought to assess the validity of the assessment rubrics in the Hybrid course, classroom instructors provided a

list of students' final grades on both speeches to compare to scores on the *Competent Speaker*—an NCA sanctioned instrument.

In order to determine if control and experimental group differences in communication apprehension existed prior to the study, all students in the course were given the PRCA-24 (McCroskey, 1982). Following the completion of their first speech (informative), instructors announced that a one-hour workshop designed to help them become more competent speakers would be offered for two extra credit points. Those who chose not to participate were offered additional opportunities to earn extra credit. Of the 128 students enrolled in the six class sections, 28 signed up to participate in the workshop and, hence, created the *experimental group*. Thirty-five students' speeches of the remaining 100 were randomly assigned to the *control group*.

Training workshop. A graduate teaching assistant and basic course instructor in the communication studies department created a script and power point presentation for the supplemental public speaking workshop that carefully outlined each of the eight competencies of the Competent Speaker Instrument (Morreale, 1990). The content of the power point script (See Appendix A) for the presentation was carefully analyzed by the researchers in the study to assure the eight competencies were covered equally. Prior to the training, students signed consent forms detailing the purpose of the study.

The eight competencies on the *Competent Speaker Form* consist of two to four sub-competencies (See Appendix B). Basic coding of the words in the script was conducted by the researchers and it was determined that each competency was presented and supported in

three ways: a) the competency was defined, b) an example of each competency and sub-competency was provided, c) and an activity or discussion to allow students to practice and connect the competency and sub-competencies was conducted. An example of these three methods of support for the workshop discussion of Competency 1—*Choose and narrow a topic* and Sub-Competency 1a and 1b—*Time constraints and your audience* is as follows:

a) Define Competency 1: Choose and narrow a topic—When you select the topic of your speech, you must always consider your audience, what their interests are, what component of your topic applies to them, and how much of this information you have time for.

b[1]) Example of Sub-Competency 1a: Time constraints—Give an example of a speech going too long. Ask them what happens if the speech runs over time (they get bored, lose interest). Ask them what happens when a speech runs too short (you may leave feeling confused, the point of the speech may be lost). Remind them of the limitations of their speech (5-7 minutes).

b[2]) Example of Sub-Competency 1b: Audience—this is important because if you lose your audience there is no point in delivering the speech. The audience for our upcoming speech is college students (mostly traditional but some nontraditional). Talk about using the audience adaptation plan to enhance audience interest in the speech—dialogue with them about how to do this effectively.

c) Activity: Narrowing Topics for Your Audience—After talking about these topics, introduce a short activity where students take their own speech

topics and with partners, share their topic and work on developing narrower sub-topics that interest their partners.

Instruments

All students completed the Personal Report of Communication Apprehension (PRCA-24; McCroskey, 1982) scale. Students were asked to complete this measure a week before their presentation to ensure that results were not skewed by their impending performance. The PRCA-24 is a self-report instrument intended to assess the apprehension an individual may feel in various communication contexts (McCroskey, 1982). Total scores can range from 24-120 with higher totals indicating more apprehensive communicators. Scores below 51 represent individuals with very low communication apprehension (CA). Scores between 51 and 80 represent individuals with moderate CA, and scores over 80 represent individuals with high CA. Aside from a total score, individual scores may be computed to represent an individual's level of apprehension in four separate communication contexts: groups, meetings, interpersonal dyads, and in the public speaking setting.

The Competent Speaker Form (Morreale, 1994) was utilized by the assessment team to evaluate the experimental (N = 28) and control (N = 35) groups for both informative and problem-solution speeches. Consisting of eight total competencies, the CSF contains two overarching dimensions for assessing communication competence: planning the oral presentation and delivering the oral presentation. With the eight competencies, the instrument allows evaluators to assess the speaker's ability to (1) choose and narrow a topic appropriate for the

audience and occasion; (2) communicate the thesis/central idea in an appropriate manner; (3) provide supporting material based on the audience and occasion; (4) use an organization pattern appropriate to the topic, audience, occasion, and purpose; (5) use language appropriate to the audience, occasion, and purpose; (6) use vocal variety in rate, pitch, and intensity to heighten and maintain interest; (7) use pronunciation, grammar, and articulation appropriate to the designated audience; and, (8) use physical behaviors that support the verbal message. In the current study, five Likert responses were created for each competency with one representing strongly disagree, two representing disagree, three representing uncertainty, four representing agree, and five representing strongly agree. Possible total scores range from eight to 40, with higher numbers signifying higher levels of oral communication competence. In addition, total scores can be evaluated based on quartiles. Scores ranging from eight to 15 reflect low oral communication competence; 16 to 23 reflect moderately low oral communication competence; 24 to 31 reflect moderately high oral communication competence; and, 32 to 40 reflect high oral communication competence.

Concurrent Validity. In order to determine validity of the Informative and Persuasive Presentation Assessment forms used in the current study, students' scores on the CSF (Morreale, 1990) and the two instruments listed above were compared. With the same public speaking competencies being measured in both the informative and persuasive rubrics, these two forms were created by the Basic Course Director (Houser, 2011) and classroom instructors received previous training in utilizing these forms and obtaining inter-

rater reliability with other instructors. Both the Informative (See Appendix C) and Persuasive Presentation (See Appendix D) grading rubrics include the following sub-scales: a) Introduction, b) Body, c) Conclusion, and d) Delivery. The first three dimensions on both instruments measure students' ability to effectively develop and organize presentation content, while the fourth dimension assesses nonverbal elements of delivery. Scores on both the Informative and Persuasive Presentation Assessment Forms range from 0-50, with higher numbers reflecting higher levels of public speaking competency. The introduction and conclusion dimensions are each worth 12 points of the students' overall score on both forms. The body is worth 16 points of the students' overall score, while the delivery dimension is worth 10 points of the overall presentation grade for both assessment instruments.

Interrater reliability. Morreale (1994) provides specific instructions for achieving inter-rater reliability when using the CSF with an assessment team of two or more. In the current study, the two primary researchers first reviewed and discussed the specifications Morreale provides under each competency to ensure initial agreement on the components being assessed within each competency. Upon individually reviewing and assessing two practice speeches via videotape, the researchers compared their scores to determine potential differences. The practice assessment, along with a thorough discussion of discrepancies, proved extremely successful in achieving interrater reliability for the study. Interrater reliabilities using the Kappa statistic were significant for both sample speeches: speech one Kappa = .85 ($p < 0.001$); speech two Kappa = .95 ($p < 0.001$).

RESULTS

Pearson correlation analysis was conducted to identify whether a relationship exists between students' scores on public speaking assessment forms (grading rubrics used in the classroom by instructors to assess informative and persuasive speaking ability) and students' scores on the Competent Speaker Form. Prior to conducting the correlation analysis, *z*-scores were computed for the following: 1) raw scores on the public speaking grades' for the informative presentation (time one), 2) raw scores on the Competent Speaker Form scores for the informative presentation (time one), 3) raw scores on the public speaking grades for the persuasive presentation (time two), and 4) raw scores on the Competent Speaker Form scores for the persuasive presentation (time two).

The correlation for the first assessment form (used to assess students' informative speaking skills) and the Competent Speaker Form, was significant, $r(63) = .60$, $p < .01$. This result suggests a moderately strong, positive relationship between the two assessment forms. The relationship between the second assessment form (used to assess students' persuasive speaking skills) and the Competent Speaker Form was also significant, $r(63) = .59$, $p < .01$. This result also suggests a moderately strong, positive relationship between the two assessment forms.

Before addressing RQ2, the research team had to confirm there were no differences between students in the control (untrained) and experimental (trained) groups prior to the training. The initial *t*-test examined differences in mean scores between the control and ex-

perimental groups (untrained and trained, respectively) at time one (prior to the training session). No significant difference was found between the groups, $t(61) = -1.16$, $p > .05$. The mean of the untrained group ($M = 29.06$, $SD = 5.49$) was not significantly different than the mean of the trained group ($M = 27.89$, $SD = 6.01$). The second *t*-test examined the difference in mean scores for communication apprehension between the control ($M = 2.78$) and experimental groups ($M = 2.68$). No significant difference was found between the two groups, $t(56) = -0.45$, $p > .05$.

To answer RQ2, an independent samples *t*-test and two paired samples *t*-tests were conducted to determine whether students who attended the supplemental public speaking skills training scored higher than students who only received classroom instruction. The independent samples *t*-test examined the differences in mean scores between the control and experimental groups (untrained and trained, respectively) at time two (after the training). No significant difference was found between the groups, $t(61) = .60$, $p > .05$. The mean of the untrained group ($M = 31.09$, $SD = 4.87$) was not significantly different than the mean of the trained group ($M = 31.82$, $SD = 4.89$).

The first paired samples *t*-test examined the difference in mean scores of the control group (untrained) at time one (after the informative speech) and time two (after the persuasive speech). The pretest score, 29.06 ($SD = 5.49$) and the mean on the posttest, 31.09 ($SD = 4.87$), revealed a significant increase from time one to time two, $t(35) = 2.44$, $p < .001$.

The second paired samples *t*-test examined the difference in mean scores of the experimental group

(trained) at time one (before training) and time two (after training). The mean on the pretest, 27.89 (SD = 6.01), and the mean on the posttest, 31.82 (SD = 4.89), revealed a significant increase from time one to time two, $t(28) = 4.10$, $p < .001$.

Discussion

The purpose of the current study was to examine and validate the assessment instruments used to evaluate student public speaking competence in the hybrid format of the basic communication course. Results suggest concurrent validity of the two assessment instruments used to measure students' public speaking competency for the informative and persuasive presentations. Thus, students who earn a high score on the Competent Speaker form are also likely to receive a high score on the Informative Presentation Assessment Form and the Persuasive Presentation Assessment Form in the hybrid course. This finding demonstrates the importance of evaluating assessment instruments utilized within communication programs and the entire discipline to determine if objectives are being measured and realized. Although there are established and standardized assessment instruments such as the Competent Speaker form (Morreale, 1990), anecdotal evidence as well as research in the communication literature reveals many institutions continue to develop their own instruments to assess public speaking competency (Morreale et al., 2006; Talkington & Boileau, 2007). It would be highly informative to know how many programs examine these instruments to determine whether they are reliable and valid. Other communication courses (as

well as courses with a public speaking emphasis) might follow a similar process to examine instruments created in-house.

In the current study, both informative and persuasive public speaking assessment instruments may be useful within other basic communication courses offering the hybrid orientation. Specifically, the directors of the basic course in the current study reason that many hybrid basic communication courses may not use the Competent Speaker Form, due to the extensive focus on the elements of delivery. Fifty percent of the score on the Competent Speaker Form is allotted to nonverbal delivery (Morreale, 1990). In hybrid versions of the basic course (those that focus on various contexts of communication), the Competent Speaker Form may be too advanced or specific. Therefore, the instruments examined in the current study may be more effective for hybrid courses or those less focused on public speaking and various public speaking contexts. In fact, both informative and persuasive assessment forms featured in the current study devote 20 percent of the students' overall presentation scores to the nonverbal elements of delivery (Author, 2011). The difference in the weighting of delivery between the two assessment tools (Competent Speaker Form and grading rubrics examined in this study) likely explains the weaker correlations. Although the correlation between the grading rubrics and the Competent Speaker Form were deemed strong, the difference in the weighting on delivery elements aids in this interpretation..

In addition to validating the two assessment instruments used to assess public speaking competency, a secondary goal of the study was to examine the transi-

tion of student public speaking skills before and after receiving supplemental skills training. Students in the typical hybrid basic communication course only receive classroom instruction on basic organizational and delivery skills. Results revealed that both groups (trained and untrained) improved their scores from time one to time two. This supports previous literature that recognizes the important role public speaking experience plays in student public speaking grades (Pearson et al., 2008; Smith & Frymier, 2006). It was curious, though, that with supplemental public speaking training, the experimental group did not score significantly higher on the second speech. This may be explained by the particular semester/term examined in the current study—a six-week summer session. As two weeks only are devoted to both informative and persuasive speeches, it is possible students had less time, in comparison to a regular long-semester, to absorb the skills promoted during the training workshop.

However, there is some evidence that training is beneficial regardless of assimilation time. If we take a closer look at the mean scores for the experimental and control groups, the mean score of the trained group (M = 27.89) was initially two points lower than the mean score of the untrained group (M = 29.06). At time two, the mean score of the trained group (M = 31.82) slightly surpassed the mean score of the untrained group (M = 31.09). Though not significant, it is important to note that the trained group experienced a greater increase in competency than the untrained group. This finding is somewhat surprising considering previous literature has consistently demonstrated that previous public speaking experience and instruction would enhance stu-

dents' public speaking skills (Pearson et al., 2008; Smith & Frymier, 2006), however, again the shorter timeframe during the summer semester may be one explanation for this result. Similarly, the authors anticipated students who volunteered to attend additional training would obtain significantly higher scores on their presentations as an indicator of their motivation to learn (Pearson, Wolf, Semlak, & Child, 2007). Future research should examine student motivation to learn as well as time-allotment for the training, in relation to assessed levels of public speaking competency. Additionally, future research should examine the longitudinal effects of public speaking training. Perhaps the training did not have immediate effects on students' competency but may impact their ability to demonstrate presentational skills in the future.

Limitations and Implications for Future Research

Limitations and Recommendations. The current study provides valuable information regarding the assessment of student public speaking competence. However, the results should be interpreted within the limitations of the study. First, and most importantly, the students in the current study were assessed by two different instructors. For classroom presentations, students were graded and assessed by trained instructors using the basic course Informative Presentation Assessment Form and the Persuasive Presentation Assessment Form. The instructors videotaped student speeches during classroom presentations and then provided the videos to the research team. The authors of the study watched and assessed the students using the Competent Speaker Form. In future studies, the re-

search team should rate the student speeches on both instruments in order to limit the variability in assessing student public speaking competency.

Another limitation of the study may be in the selection process for the participants. Students self-selected to attend the training session from two separate (large-lecture) sections of the basic course. This limitation allowed for "a greater change of bias to exist in the results" (Wrench et al., 2008, p. 288) and could mean that more proactive students would self-select in order to help increase their presentation scores. Future research in this area should use probability sampling techniques to identify both the control and experimental groups to increase the generalizability of the results. It is important to consider these limitations when interpreting the findings of the current study.

Finally, the obvious limitations of a short-semester should have been considered. It was initially thought that students receiving training would be impacted regardless of the time allowed to absorb the information and practice using it. To verify the current findings, it would be helpful to conduct this study during a regular long-semester. Perhaps if students have more time to practice the skills offered in the training session, scores would differ significantly.

Implications. The results of the current study reveal that both the Informative and Persuasive Presentation Assessment Forms utilized in the current study are viable options for use in the basic communication course. Specifically, the form will be useful in hybrid versions of the basic course. Furthermore, institutions creating instruments for assessment of student public speaking skills should engage in a similar process of

validating forms using the NCA sanctioned Competent Speaker Form.

Additionally, the results regarding the influence of skills training on student public speaking competency are significant not only to the basic communication course, but to the instructional communication discipline as a whole. Performance-based assessment has long been viewed as a measure of teaching effectiveness (Rubin, Welch, & Buerkel, 1995). Furthermore, educators are often held accountable for their students' ability to achieve learning objectives. Future research examining the impact of skills training on public speaking scores/competency should focus on providing a longer training session or multiple training sessions to students. In the current study, the students in the training group may have improved more dramatically had there been multiple training sessions for them to attend. This would have enabled them to emphasize each of the components of public speaking competency more heavily.

Lastly, these results are important to consider for programs that offer communication labs or those contemplating the creation of a communication lab or center. As Helsel and Hogg (2006) discuss, oral communication labs can serve an important function in the assessment and evaluation of student public speaking skills. In addition to this, a communication lab could benefit communication departments and possibly the university; some programs are beginning to offer laboratory skills training to campus staff and faculty. If a communication lab is available, t is recommended that students (as a required part of the course or as extra credit) in all courses requiring / teaching public speaking, be asked to visit the communication lab for training. Re-

sults of the current study suggest that the instruction in the classroom as well as the training and public speaking experience students gain throughout the course are responsible for improving scores. It is likely then, that students enrolled in public-speaking focused basic communication courses would display higher competency scores. Therefore, students enrolled in a hybrid, basic communication course would benefit from extra opportunities to practice public speaking skills in front of trained professionals. Future research should continue to examine how communication labs and skill-based training in public speaking could improve students' communication competency.

As public speaking will most likely continue to be a sought-after skill by employers and human resource directors, institutions of higher education (and communication departments specifically) will continue to be charged with the goal of providing students with these skill sets. An integral component of this assessment process will to continue to examine the various assessment instruments for their validity and applicability to "real world" skills. With this in mind, educators must continue to explore various methods and tools of public speaking assessment in higher education.

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APPENDIX A

POWERPOINT PRESENTATION NOTES FOR COMPETENT SPEAKER TRAINING WORKSHOP

Introductory Slide—Enhancing Public Speaking

- Welcome to the Public Speaking Workshop!

Approximately 10 minutes before the workshop begins, have this PowerPoint presentation up and running on this introductory slide. Greet students as they walk in, and hand them a copy of the PowerPoint slides (printed 3 to a page with space on the right hand side for notes) and invite them to have a seat where they like. My goal during this "pre-workshop" time is to welcome the students and help them to feel comfortable. Since they were pulled from only 2 different classes, many of the students will know each other.

When it is time for the workshop to begin, call the students to attention by announcing that we are about to begin. Start by introducing myself, including my name and my position at Texas State (stand-alone instructor). Because I visited Jill's classes several times (to introduce the study, to have them sign up for it and take the survey, and to run the camera during her informative speeches), I expect that the students will already be familiar with me.

Continue the introductions by asking students to just go around the table and introduce themselves by their first and last name. This will help me to become more familiar with the students.

After the brief introductions are complete, remind the students what the purpose of the workshop is. Tell them: even if they did well on their informative speech, they still may have areas in which to improve, since even the most competent speakers sometimes have weak areas. Say that I hope they will find this workshop helpful. Ask for their help in making it run smoothly by participating in any activities. Inform them that,

by the time they are done today, they will have a jumpstart on their outlines, and they should feel more comfortable with their delivery. Say that we will begin by reviewing today's agenda.

Slide 2—Preview

- Choosing and Narrowing a Topic
- Communicating the Specific Purpose
- Using Supporting Material
- Organizing Your Speech
- Incorporating Effective Language
- Maintaining Vocal Variety
- Using Good Pronunciation and Grammar
- Exhibiting Appropriate Physical Behaviors

Tell them there are eight main areas where a speaker can be judged as "competent"—think of them as criteria for speaking well. There are four "content" criteria and four "delivery" criteria. Briefly review the eight competencies (i.e. just go down the list and mention each line). Tell them there are slides for each of these and that we will spend an approximately equal time on each one so that they can enhance their speech.

Slide 3—Choosing and Narrowing a Topic

- Purpose of the speech
- Time constraints
- Audience

Tell them that step one is to choose a topic. When you select the topic of your speech, there are several important things to consider. Making the right choices will increase audience engagement.

General purpose—Ask them to list different possible purposes (to inform, to entertain, to persuade). Ask them to ID the purpose of the upcoming speech (to persuade)

Time constraints—Give an example of a speech going too long. Ask them what happens if the speech runs over time (they get bored, lose interest). Ask them what happens when a speech runs too short (you may leave feeling confused, the point of the speech may be lost). Remind them of the limitations for their speech (5-7 minutes).

Audience—this is important because, if you lose your audience, there is no point in delivering the speech. The audience for our upcoming speech is: (college students; mostly traditional but some untraditional). Talk about using the audience adaptation plan to enhance audience interest in the speech—dialogue with them about how to do this effectively.

After talking about these topics, introduce a short activity:

By this time, the students will have already chosen a speech topic and had it approved by their instructor . I will request ahead of time that they bring their speech topic to this workshop with them so that we can work with it. Ask them to pair up, introduce themselves to their partner, and share their topic and suggested subtopics with each other. Ask them to consider their subtopics and if they seem broad and narrow enough. Ask them to consider whether or not the speech will fit into the allotted time constraints. Ask them to consider ways to tailor the speech to the audience. Have them list two ways they can improve their topic (examples: narrowing or broadening the subtopics, ways to appeal to audience, strategies of what to cut/add if they are short/long on time). The students will have three minutes to discuss these topics in pairs. After three minutes have elapsed, go around the table and have each student share one thing he/she might do to improve their topic. Encourage the students to write down anything that they might be able to use and had not thought of.

****During ALL activities during this seminar in which I have them work with one another, I will be walking around the room, talking to the students about what their task is, answering questions, and helping them with any problems****

Tell them, now that we've chosen our topic, we need to move on to how we will communicate our ideas to the audience.

Slide 4—Communicating the Specific Purpose

- Clarifying your specific purpose
- Introducing your topic in the Introduction
- Summarizing your topic in the Conclusion

Tell them: think of this like a thesis statement from English class—what do you want your audience to TAKE AWAY?

Tell them: Your specific purpose should be broad enough to cover everything you want your audience to "take away", but also specific enough for your audience to understand EXACTLY what you want to tell them

One of the ways that we make this work for persuasive speeches is to include a "propositional statement". This previews your SPECIFIC problem(s) and SPECIFIC solution(s). It is very similar to the "Initial Preview" for your informative speeches.

Not only is it important to have a clear specific purpose in mind, it is important to introduce it in the beginning of the speech (tell them what you're going to tell them) and then review it at the end of the speech (tell them what you've told them).

Keep the points in the same order that you will talk about them—ask them why this is important (answer: because this helps the audience to organize the speech and keep the content straight in their minds).

Bring up the issue: before they even get to the propositional statement, they've already covered the attention getter, the relevance statement, and the credibility statement—so what are some ways that you can make sure the audience knows what you're talking about from the very beginning? (possible answers should center around making sure that you clearly tie in the attention getter with the speech topic, make sure that

you use the relevance/credibility statements to introduce the speech topic as well).

Slide 5—Using Supporting Material

- Keep material *relevant* to your subtopics
- Keep material credible
- Possible types of supporting material
- Verbally acknowledging your supporting material

Tell them: it is ALWAYS important to have relevant supporting material. Why? (answers: it backs up what you are saying). It's like making a case in a court of law—if the lawyers bring up unrelated material, it does nothing to enhance the case and may actually hurt the case.

Why is it important to use credible sources instead of just Wikipedia and other such sources? (answer: it makes YOU seem more credible).

Talk about potential types of supporting material. Talk about "good" (effective) evidence versus "bad" (ineffective) evidence. Have them list types (answers: books, magazines, journal articles, newspapers, videos, interviews, etc). Ask them: By a show of hands, how many used a "non-library" search engine (like google, yahoo) to help you conduct research? (pause to take a count—it is likely that most, if not all, will raise their hand). Ask them: if it is just a webpage, how do you know it's credible? (answer: if they can prove that an expert, or some "expert organization", wrote the website).

Verbally acknowledging supporting material: Was it hard to remember how to do this? Did you see any students in your own class citing incorrectly? (For example, did anyone credit the evidence to someone, but give no indication of who that person was?) How should you properly cite sources?

Exercise: pass out note cards which have names of authors, article titles, and/or organizations on them. Ask them to pair up with their partners from earlier. With their partners, they are to "properly" cite the source that was given

to them—they may make up where the authors are from and what evidence the sources offered. For example, a student may have "Janet Smith" on their note card. They might turn to the person next to them and say, "according to Janet Smith, CEO of Awesome Toy Enterprises, Inc., 23% of all children under age four currently own a Tickle Me Elmo doll." The point is to get them practicing this idea aloud, since many students find it difficult to do while speaking. Allow 3 minutes for this exercise; have them trade note cards as they finish each one.

Slide 6—Organizing Your Speech

- Organizational pattern
- Introduction
- Body
- Conclusion
- Transitions

Talk about the three parts necessary for any speech—introduction, body, conclusion

Discuss what goes into each part:

Introduction—Attention getter, relevance statement, credibility, propositional statement—Tell them that all of these things should go into ANY speech—think about the Informative speeches where we had the same things. Even though this is a different type of speech, your audience still needs all of these things in the introduction. Sometimes they are inherently clearer than other times (for example, the President does not need to work hard on "credibility" statements when he gives the State of the Union address—as President, he is already credible enough to speak on this subject). It depends on how familiar you and your audience are with one another.

Body—appropriate supporting material—remind them that we just covered this point.

Conclusion—You need to summarize what you've said. Remember what we talked about in terms of communicating the specific purpose—you need this information in your con-

clusion as well. You want to be very clear and explicit here—within the persuasive speeches, you restate the specific problem(s) and the specific solution(s). You also need to have a "call to action"—some statement that motivates your audience to do something or take away something from the speech. Last, you should have a memorable closing statement—summarize the speech in some memorable way. Perhaps tell a short story, give a quote, or end with a statistic.

Transitions—it is important to "signpost"—to tell the audience where you've been and where you are going. This also helps them to keep the information clear in their minds. Don't get too creative with the wording of your transitions, especially if you are speaking to an audience who does not know much about the topic. Rewording the transition may confuse your audience.

Activity: Ask them to pair up again. With their partners, they are to brainstorm and write down ideas for parts of the introduction and conclusion as follows: (1) the attention getter, (2) the relevance statement, (3) the credibility statement, (4) the transition to the first body paragraph, (5) the call to action, and (6) the memorable closing. Give them 5 minutes to complete this exercise (if 5 minutes is not sufficient, either extend the time by one more minute, or cut the activity off—I will decide based on how far they are able to get, and also based on if I think one more minute will allow them to finish up. Regardless, they should at least get through the introduction pieces they are asked to compose).

Slide 7—Incorporating Effective Language

- Clear, vivid language
- Avoiding offensive language
- Speaking in a conversational style

Using clear, vivid language—Think adjectives! Group activity: Introduce some common words that come up within speeches and have them call out ways to enhance those words.

Example: "She felt sick." Example: "The solution is a good one." Do 3-4 of these short examples as a group.

Avoiding offensive language—make sure that you take special care not to offend anyone in the room. Potential areas for concern are: racism, sexism. You have to be careful—even if you are in that group, you may still offend. Example: an African-American student was doing a problem/solution speech on racism in America. Her problem was that it still exists, and her solution explained ways to combat it. She wanted to start out her speech with a racist joke to illustrate the idea that it is still a problem today. Even though her intentions were good, she had to change the joke because it was offensive.

Speaking in a conversational style:

Tell them—make sure you avoid jargon. Define jargon (language specific to a particular field, that may be unfamiliar to others). Ask them: when will this be especially important? (answer: if you have a topic that your audience does not know much about, or is highly specialized).

Talk about the balance between reading from cards (too scripted) and being too relaxed (could come off as unprofessional).

Slide 8—Maintaining Vocal Variety

- Vary your vocal pitch
- Make sure your words are well-paced
- Make sure your audience can hear you

Vocal Pitch—Think about Ben Stein. We've all seen this commercial (Clear Eyes): http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RcH-3d-BZn4 (time: 0:15). Ask: Does this drive you crazy?

Partner Activity: pair up. Pass out notecards that have several (6-7) emotional statements on them. (Example: My day yesterday was amazing.) Have the students practice reading the statements aloud to one another, over-exaggerating the vocalics in each statement. Allow 2 minutes for this short exer-

cise. Talk about: What can you take away from this exercise? Will it help you when rehearsing your speech? Can you be TOO enthusiastic?

Make sure your words are well-paced—You have the tendency to rush through things when you are nervous, so practice and make a point of slowing down if you need to. Make sure you keep this consistent throughout your speech.

Volume—stress that you don't want to be too loud, OR too quiet. If you are too quiet, your audience will not be able to understand you, and if you are too loud, they will stop listening because they will become annoyed. Example: Gilbert Gottfried. http://www.comedycentral.com/videos/index.jhtml?title=gilbert-gottfried-pt.-1&videoId=179741—Show only the first 30 seconds of this because it gets inappropriate—but it illustrates his tendency to yell EVERYTHING.

Slide 9—Using Good Pronunciation and Grammar

- Learn to pronounce and articulate all the words in your speech
- Use correct grammar
- Cut down on filler words

Pronunciation and articulation—you have to practice your speech so that you will know exactly how to pronounce the words. If you do not know, consult the internet—you can find dictionary websites that will pronounce the word for you. Example: video clip of Asian woman singing Mariah Carey song: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BNQLmHKlmiE (time—1:14) Talk about the clip—What did the mispronounciation do to her credibility? (answer: killed it—people laughed at her, and now she has made it to failblog.org).

Grammar rules—It is important to know the correct grammatical rules for what you are trying to say. Remember: you are the expert in this subject, and if your language does not show it, you will lose credibility.

Filler words—Think back to class when you did the exercise with impromptu speeches and filler words. What are some of the most common vocal disfluencies? (um, uh, like). Example: Miley Cyrus clip from Regis and Kelly: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2A3_0LnW85s Talk about this clip and what Miley could have done better. Ask: what should you do instead? (Pause rather than insert these words).

Slide 10—Exhibiting Appropriate Physical Behaviors

- Dress appropriately
- Use good eye contact
- Use deliberate body movements
- Use appropriate facial expressions

Dress appropriately—Discuss: different occasions require different styles of dress. What does your instructor want for this speech? (I have been told that Jill does not REQUIRE them to dress up, but "strongly encourages" it.)

Eye contact—What are ways that eye contact can be inappropriate? (answers: using none, scanning the room, staring at one person too long, looking at objects instead of people).

Body movements—This encompasses gestures, and movement of the entire body. Show: Ricky Bobby clip: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QqhkdHlCHLk (time: 1:00). Discuss: What SHOULD you do with your hands?

Facial expressions—Make sure that your facial expressions match up with what you are saying. News reporters are great at this—they have to report on a lot of serious subjects, so you will see them do this face (demonstrate—raised eyebrows, mouth set, leaned slightly forward). Ask: how can you alter this based on your own topic? Should you anticipate being able to control facial expressions? (Answer: this is probably too difficult to do)—SO: How do we get this to be better? PRACTICE!! Nonverbal behavior should come naturally, and if it does not, it's because we are thinking about it and not thinking

about other things. The more comfortable you are with your speech, the better off you will be.

Slide 11—Summary

- Choosing and Narrowing a Topic
- Communicating the Specific Purpose
- Using Supporting Material
- Organizing Your Speech
- Incorporating Effective Language
- Maintaining Vocal Variety
- Using Good Pronunciation and Grammar
- Exhibiting Appropriate Physical Behaviors

Briefly remind them what we covered—list the eight competencies again. Stress that I hope they have taken something away from this workshop and encourage them to think about ways they can incorporate this information into their own lives any time they are asked to deliver a public speech.

Slide 12—Any Questions?

- Thank you for your attention!!
- Have a GREAT day!

Thank them for their attention and dismiss them.

APPENDIX B

The following describes in more detail the goals for each competency:

Planning the Oral Presentation—the speaker…

1. Chooses and narrows a topic so that it is appropriate for the audience and occasion.

- The topic or theme is chosen based on the needs and interest of the audience.
- The topic or theme can be discussed in the time allotted for the oral presentation.

2. Communicates the thesis/central idea in a manner appropriate for audience and occasion.
   - There is one sentence (thesis/central idea) that essentially communicates to the audience "what the oral presentation is about."
   - This idea will be introduced in the beginning of the presentation and summarized in the conclusion.
3. Provides appropriate supporting material based on the audience and occasion.
   - The information provided in the body of the oral presentation supports the thesis/central idea (see #2) and does not stray into other central ideas.
   - The material in the body of the oral presentation serves to clarify, prove, provide examples, share research findings, provide opinions, etc., that all relate to the thesis/central idea.
   - Research and/or other sources used in the oral presentation is verbally acknowledged.
4. Uses an organizational pattern appropriate to the topic, audience, occasion and purpose.
   - There is a clear introduction, body and conclusion in the oral presentation.
   - Introduction—opening words, thesis/central idea, preview of supporting points to be discussed in the body, why topic is of interest or need to audience
   - Body—main supporting points are logically ordered and discussed one at a time
   - Conclusion—summary of thesis/central idea, closing words
   - Transitions are used that allow the listeners to follow the organization of the oral presentation.

These transitions are found from the introduction to the body, between main points in the body, and from the body to the conclusion.

Delivering the Oral Presentation—the speaker…

5. Uses language appropriate to the audience, occasion and purpose.
   - The language used is clear, vivid, memorable and non-offensive.
   - A conversational style of speech is ideally used (as opposed to a written style of speech).
6. Uses vocal variety in rate, pitch and intensity to heighten and maintain interest.
   - The voice varies and changes as it relates to the information in the oral presentation.
   - The student speaks so that he/she is heard and understood.
7. Uses pronunciation, grammar and articulation appropriate to the designated audience.
   - All words are properly pronounced.
   - Grammatical rules of the language are obeyed.
   - The student has a minimum of distracting "verbal junk" such as uh, like, y'know, etc.
8. Uses physical behaviors that support the verbal message.
   - The dress and appearance are appropriate for the occasion.
   - Eye contact with the audience is maintained as much as possible.
   - Body movements are deliberate and non-distracting.
   - The face and body reflect the mood or emotional tone of the words.

APPENDIX C

INFORMATIVE PRESENTATION ASSESSMENT FORM

Name: _____ Total Score:_____ */50*

Topic: _____ TotaI Time: _____

_____ **Introduction** (12 Points)

_____ Gained audience attention
_____ Made topic relevant to audience
_____ Established credibility
_____ Stated central idea clearly
_____ Stated initial preview of 3 main ideas clearly
_____ Transition to 1st body topic

____ **Body** (16 Points)

_____ Included 3 main points
_____ Supported 3 main points with evidence
_____ Included transitions in the body between main points
_____ Organized well: topical. spatial. chronological
_____ Cited at least 3 credible sources (one in each body paragraph)
_____ Established relevance Within body of speech

_____ **Conclusion** (12 Points)

_____ Provided transition from body to conclusion
_____ Summarized central idea
_____ Provided final Summary
_____ Provided closure to the speech

_____ **Delivery** (10 Points)

_____ Used vocal variety and enthusiasm
_____ Used appropriate articulation/pronunciation
_____ Used minimal vocal disfluencies
_____ Used proper speaking rate

_____ Established eye contact with audience (no reading)
_____ Used appropriate gestures and bodily movement
_____ Used note cards

_____ **Met Time Limits** (up to -5)

APPENDIX D
PERSUASIVE PRESENTATION ASSESSMENT FORM

Name: _____ Total Score_____ / 50

Topic: _____ Time: _____

_____ **Introduction** (12 points)

_____ Gained attention
_____ Made topic relevant to audience
_____ Established credibility
_____ Indicated propositional statement clearly with problem/solution
_____Included transition to first point

_____ **Body** (16 points)

_____ Presented problem(s) clearly
_____ Provided evidence of problem(s)
_____ Demonstrated relevance of problem(s) with evidence
_____ Presented solution(s) clearly
_____ Proved solution(s) will address problem with evidence
_____ Used descriptive language to evoke audience emotions
_____ Used precise and clear language
_____ Included transitions in the body between main points
_____ Cited at least 3 credible sources within problem and solution (1 source in each body paragraph)

_____ **Conclusion** (12 points)

_____ Provided transition from body to conclusion
_____ Reviewed problem-solution propositional statement
_____ Motivated the audience to thought/action
_____ Provided memorable closure to speech

_____ **Delivery** (10 points)

_____ Used vocal variety and enthusiasm
_____ Used appropriate articulation/pronunciation
_____ Used minimal vocal disfluencies
_____ Used proper speaking rate
_____ Established eye contact with audience (no reading)
_____ Used appropriate gestures and body movement
_____ Used note cards

_____ **Met Time Limits** (up to -5)